

it's kind of funny. You smile for the camera, you hold very still, you act as if you're having a good time—but it's a day when you're really having terrible cramps. I guess I shouldn't say this, but sometimes modeling seemed so phoney and fake I just had to laugh. They thought that was great, they had a great smile from you, and they just snapped away, thinking that, well, I was having a good time. Sure, sometimes it was fun. But modeling can also be a little crazy. I once asked why I had to wear a bathing suit for a toothpaste ad. He looked at me as if I was some kind of crazy!

Lydia Bodrero Reed recalled that Norma Jeane was “very serious, very ambitious and always pleasant to be with. There was only one problem for her. She did so many covers that for a while she was considered overexposed—the magazine and advertising people had seen so much of her that after a year she couldn't get much work.” According to Bodrero, there was another danger for a model, a different kind of overexposure. “Miss Snively warned us never, ever to appear ‘undraped’ (as she called it)—nude photography, we were told, was the kiss of death for a model.”

For Norma Jeane, Snively had an additional particular recommendation: that she lighten her brown hair. Whereas a brunette would always emerge darker in a photo (and, Snively believed, would bring a dusky hue to everything), a blonde could be photographed in any wardrobe and in any light. She reminded Norma Jeane that, in the words of the play, gentlemen prefer blondes; she also pointed to Betty Grable and, before her, to Jean Harlow.

Accordingly, that winter Snively dispatched her to a photographer named Raphael Wolff, who just happened to be an old friend of Doc Goddard. He agreed to use Norma Jeane in some shampoo print advertisements, but only (and almost certainly in collusion with Snively) if she would dye her brown hair. Soon she was sitting nervously at Frank and Joseph's, a popular movie colony salon, where a beautician named Sylvia Barnhart supervised the straightening and bleaching to a golden blond. The maintenance of this coiffure would require regular repetitions and a lifetime of meticulous care—especially later, when the color was made even lighter, to glazed and haloed blond and eventually to shimmering platinum.

That winter the trio of Snively-Wolff-Barnhart brought closer to

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reality Grace's long-cherished hope that in her precious Norma Jeane there would one day be completed the fantastic recreation of Jean Harlow. And when the Goddards moved back to California from West Virginia that summer, no one was more thrilled than Grace with Norma Jeane's new image. But Jim Dougherty returned to California, too (from his overseas service), and he saw more changes than simply his wife's hair color. She was particularly excited about a short silent film that the Blue Book Agency had just made of her. Smiling directly into the lens in medium-closeup shot, she modeled a swimsuit, walked in a summer sundress, smiled and waved at the camera. It had been, she told him, the most exciting day of her life thus far. Despite Norma Jeane's earlier report that Jim had approved her modeling aspirations, he was now unimpressed with the results.

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Hughes was too late. On September 5, *Variety* printed her name for the first time, reporting under the "New Contracts" column that she was one of two young women signed by Fox.

At the age of twenty, the new potential starlet was a year too young to sign a binding contract in the State of California. Grace was still her legal guardian, and so, despite the awkwardness and irregularities in their relationship, Norma Jeane again had to turn to her. Grace McKee Goddard had been at the center of every major moment in Norma Jeane's life: her departure from the Bolenders to live with Gladys; Gladys's subsequent confinement in asylums; the details of Norma Jeane's material welfare and her sojourn at the Orphans Home; her time with cousins in Compton; her return to the Goddards and the shock of being left behind when they moved East; her marriage to Dougherty and the arrangements for her divorce. Sometimes the girl had felt like an unnecessary adjunct, a dispensable if charming object in her guardian's life. But just as often, she had been infused with a sense that she bore within her an idealized self, a lustrous new Harlow to whom professionals now also favorably compared her. Grace had indeed been the great manager of Norma Jeane's life, and dependence on Grace had been the pattern of that management (as it had been with Dougherty). But subordination wearies human relations, and the long history of subordination must have rankled a young woman who was quickly learning how much she could achieve on her own, with energy, a certain coy, girlish expertise—and with her body.

However much Grace's protection, obsessions and manipulations evoked a tangle of conflicting feelings, Norma Jeane had known more critical history with her than with anyone. Grace knew her as no one did—and in a sense Grace, trapped in a bleak and loveless marriage from which alcohol was no escape, now depended on Norma Jeane to make something come out right, to realize her own dream. When Grace, with an unsteady signature, wrote her own name on the Fox contract below Norma Jeane Dougherty's, she was simultaneously justifying her past authority and releasing the object of it into an unpredictable but inevitable autonomy. She was in effect signing a warranty for Norma Jeane's maturity in a way she had not with the Dougherty marriage; she was permitting herself to become nonessential, a player in the past who might not be retained in the future.

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Just days before the contract was countersigned (on August 24, 1946), Norma Jeane was summoned to Ben Lyon's office. Only one detail remained to be adjudicated: the matter of her name. Dougherty, Lyon said bluntly, would have to be changed, for no one was sure whether it should be pronounced "Dok-er-tee" or "Dor-rit-tee" or "Doe-rit-tee" or perhaps even "Doff-er-tee." Did she have any preference for a surname? Norma Jeane did not hesitate: Monroe was the name of her mother's family, the only relatives of which she could be truly certain. (Like Jean Harlow, she was also choosing her mother's maiden name for her own.) Lyon agreed: Monroe was a short, easy name, as American as the name of the president who bore it.

The matter of a first name was not so simple. "Norma Jeane Monroe" was awkward, and "Norma Monroe" was almost a tongue-twister. At first they decided on "Jean Monroe," but she was unhappy with that. She wanted to change everything if they were going to change anything, and while Lyon thought, she spoke of her background. She had never known her father . . . her foster father was a demanding, abusive man . . . in high school she was called the "Mmmmm Girl."

Lyon leaned forward in his chair:

"I know who you are, you're Marilyn!" he cried, adding later, "I told her that once there was a lovely actress named Marilyn Miller and that she reminded me of her."

The connection was a logical one for Lyon to make as Norma Jeane sat before him recounting her history, afraid she might lose this chance over their inability to find a suitable name. Lyon had thought of Marilyn Miller not only because, like the girl before him, she too had blond hair and blue-green eyes. Lyon had been in love with Marilyn Miller many years earlier, and he had been engaged to marry her before he met Bebe Daniels. He knew that as a child Miller had been deserted by her father and then had a stepfather who was a tyrant. She had become a Broadway musical comedy star during the 1920s (in such hits as the trio *Sally* [1920], *Sunny* [1925] and *Rosalie* [1928]); she also had enjoyed a brief success in films. Then, after three marriages, a failing career and increasingly wretched health, she died in 1936 at the age of thirty-seven. Ben Lyon said he was gazing at the virtual reincarnation of Marilyn Miller—and, he had to agree with Shamroy, of Jean Harlow.

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became virtually an obsession with which studio publicists were only too happy to cooperate.

Secretive about her past though she was, Marilyn could never forget its most poignant facts—her unknown father and unfamiliar mother. As 1952 began, she set up a plan for a woman named Inez Nelson to act as her business manager and to act as Gladys's conservator. From Marilyn's income a regular contribution was made toward the care of her mother, whom Inez visited several times each month in the various state hospitals where she dwelled. Mother and daughter had not met in five years, nor had there been any exchange of telephone calls or letters. More to the point, Gladys was never discussed, for Fox's publicists had long followed Marilyn's lead and declared the actress an orphan. And so for the present Gladys Monroe remained a woman on the fringes of her daughter's memory, a shadowy figure who was a potential cause of shame, someone Marilyn assisted only privately.

In 1952, she had no less than three addresses—furnished apartments on Hilddale Avenue in West Hollywood and, two blocks from that, on Doheny Drive; and then a comfortable suite at the Bel-Air Hotel in the rustic, secluded setting of Stone Canyon. Then as ever, Marilyn seemed a rootless soul who felt she belonged to no one; it was her unstated (and perhaps unacknowledged) aim, therefore, to belong to everyone.

There would always be surrogate parents, and in 1952 those roles were neatly filled by Natasha Lytess and Michael Chekhov. In this regard, Marilyn's renewed desire to play Grushenka in a film of *The Brothers Karamazov* had a pointed basis, for in so doing she could become the adopted Russian daughter of this exotic Russian "couple." And because they were convinced it was possible, Chekhov and Lytess encouraged her—as did Arthur Miller, to whom she wrote. He had been "dazzled by the richness of *The Brothers Karamazov*," he wrote, since his college days.

But Marilyn could be recalcitrant and uncooperative, selfishly late for appointments and presumptuous of others' generosity. When Michael Chekhov told Marilyn that her tardiness upset his schedule and that perhaps they should suspend tutorials, he received an irresistible letter:

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urchased with proceeds from the sale of his previous home, and there could be no alimonies on either side; there remained only the exchange of a few personal items. Arthur signed a waiver of his rights to contest a unilateral filing for divorce.

And so on Friday, January 20, 1961, Pat Newcomb accompanied Marilyn and her attorney, Aaron Frosch, on a swift mission to Mexico. At Pat's suggestion, the day of Kennedy's inauguration was deliberately chosen "because the press and the whole country would be looking at that, and we could slip away and return unnoticed," which indeed they did. On Friday evening, the trio arrived in El Paso, Texas, crossed the border into Juárez, and before Judge Miguel Gómez Guerra Marilyn pleaded "incompatibility of character" and requested an immediate divorce. This was granted forthwith, and they were back in New York by Saturday evening. Effective Tuesday, January 24, she was no longer Mrs. Arthur Miller.

Looking tired and depressed, she was blunt with reporters. "I am upset and I don't feel like being bothered with publicity right now," she said on her return—but then she tried to appear cheerful, adding with a rueful smile, "but I would love to have a plate of tacos and enchiladas—we didn't have time for food in Mexico!" She was, as Pat recalled, trying valiantly despite her evident depression over the formal termination of the marriage. At the same time, Pat knew that "at the core of her, she was really strong, much stronger than all of us—and that was something we tended to forget, because she seemed so vulnerable, and one always felt it necessary to watch out for her."

As for her comments on Arthur Miller, Marilyn displayed her customary dignity when publicly discussing former husbands or lovers. "It would be indelicate of me to discuss this. I feel it would be trespassing," she said. "Mr. Miller is a wonderful man and a great writer, but it didn't work out that we should be husband and wife. But everybody I ever loved, I still love a little." Typically, there was no bitterness, no rancor toward those from whom she felt estranged, even from those she felt had in some ways abused, demeaned or been faithless to her. Marilyn confided only in friends whose discretion she could trust: she had no desire to justify herself before the press. To show her essential goodwill, she attended the New York premiere of *The Misfits* at the Capitol Theater on January 31. Montgomery Clift was her escort.



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But beneath the brave, cheerful public exterior, Marilyn's mood was as dark as the New York winter. *The Misfits*, like *Let's Make Love*, was not well received by most critics, and audiences were puzzled by the story and disappointed with the leading players. By February 1, after the divorce, the failure of two films, the breakdown of negotiations for *Rain* and no prospects for the work that always somehow sustained her despite its anxiety-provoking aspects, Marilyn was able to find consolation in nothing, and so she told Marianne Kris as well as her friends. Except for her visits to Kris, she stayed at home in her darkened bedroom, playing sentimental records, subsisting on sleeping pills and rapidly losing weight.

Her condition alarmed Marianne Kris, who suggested to Marilyn that she check into a private ward of New York Hospital for a physical workup and a good rest, with meals served and every comfort provided.

On Sunday, February 5, Kris drove Marilyn to the vast Cornell University-New York Hospital complex, overlooking the East River at Sixty-ninth Street. After freely signing her own admission papers (as "Faye Miller," to avoid publicity), Marilyn was taken not to a typical hospital room but—as Kris had arranged—to the Payne Whitney Clinic, the psychiatric division of New York Hospital. There, to Marilyn's horror, she was placed in a locked and padded room, one of the cells for the most disturbed patients.

Such an incarceration might cause a perfectly healthy person violent upset and panic: for Marilyn, it was as if she had at last become the heir of the mental illness she believed had bedeviled her ancestors. It had all happened so quickly, as she later told Norman Rosten, Ralph Roberts and Susan Strasberg, that she was pitched into a state of extreme shock. She broke down weeping and sobbing, shouting to be released and banging on the locked steel door until her fists were raw and bleeding. She was ignored, and the staff reaction was that here indeed was a psychotic case, just as her physician had attested. Her clothes and purse were removed and she was put into hospital garb and threatened with a straitjacket unless she behaved.

A young psychiatric intern, visiting her cell (it can only be called that) on Monday morning, evaluated her as "extremely disturbed," which in a sense she was, and as "potentially self-destructive," a judg-

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ment he made after Marilyn smashed a small window on her locked bathroom door in an effort to get to the toilet. As she told the doctor, she was upset and humiliated—not to say betrayed, as she later told her friends. But the intern merely asked repeatedly, “Why are you so unhappy?”—as if she were at a luxury resort and not confined against her will in a lunatic asylum. Quite rationally, Marilyn answered, “I’ve been paying the best doctors a fortune to find out why, and you’re asking *me*?” Such a logical counter is often taken as a challenge, not the sort of contradiction most professionals wish to hear.

For two days and nights, she endured this frightening situation. Marilyn, who since childhood hated locked doors and never barred her own bedroom, was almost in a state of total nervous breakdown, and from this point in her life never locked her bedroom door nor permitted a key or latch to operate it. Susan Strasberg agreed with Ralph Roberts and Rupert Allan that Marilyn “always had a means of making a fast getaway even from a studio soundstage whenever she felt the walls were closing in on her. She hated to feel closed in,” at work or at home.

Finally a sympathetic nurse’s aide agreed to give her notepaper and then to deliver a message to Lee and Paula Strasberg, who received it on Wednesday, February 8:

Dear Lee and Paula,

Dr. Kris has put me in the hospital under the care of two idiot doctors. They both should not be my doctors. I’m locked up with these poor nutty people. I’m sure to end up a nut too if I stay in this nightmare. Please help me. This is the last place I should be. I love you both.

Marilyn.

P.S. I’m on the dangerous floor. It’s like a cell. They had my bathroom door locked and I couldn’t get their key to get into it, so I broke the glass. But outside of that I haven’t done anything that is uncooperative.

But the Strasbergs were only friends, powerless to help, much less to order or obtain Marilyn’s release. They may well have contacted Kris, who would not have provided any details of Marilyn’s condition.



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When there was no reply from the Strasbergs by the morning of Thursday the ninth, Marilyn was permitted to make one telephone call. Frantic for help but managing to affect calm, she tried two or three friends but received no answer at their homes. At last she reached Joe DiMaggio in Florida.

Joe and Marilyn had not met for almost six years, but during that time she had remained in contact with his family and asked about his welfare. Since 1958, Joe held a \$100,000-a-year job as a corporate vice-president for V. H. Monette, Inc., a supplier for military posts. For this company, Joe was essentially a goodwill ambassador, traveling to army bases worldwide and presiding at exhibition baseball games. During the training season, he coached the Yankees in Florida.

As for his private life, Joe had come close to marrying a woman named Marian McKnight in 1957, but this relationship ended when she was crowned Miss America; otherwise, there was no serious romance in his life. He was, according to family and friends, never out of love with Marilyn: "He carried a torch bigger than the Statue of Liberty," according to his close friend, the Washington attorney Edward Bennett Williams, whose testimony was typical. "His love for her never diminished through the years." And so it was to Joe that Marilyn now turned for help. "He loved her a great deal and they had always remained in contact," agreed Valmore Monette.

DiMaggio arrived that evening from St. Petersburg Beach and demanded that Marilyn be released from the clinic into his custody the following day. Informed that this would have to be approved by Dr. Kris, he telephoned her and said that if Marilyn were not discharged by Friday he would (his words, according to Marilyn) "take the hospital apart brick by brick." Kris suggested that Marilyn enter another hospital if Payne Whitney were not to her liking; Joe replied that would be discussed in due course.

Things then happened quickly.

First, to avoid even the possibility of unwelcome publicity, it was arranged for Ralph Roberts to deliver Marilyn back to Fifty-seventh Street, with Kris literally along for the ride. As Ralph recalled, Marilyn unleashed a storm of protest and criticism against her therapist, and after Marilyn was safely returned home (where Joe awaited), Ralph drove Kris back to her residence. En route, as he recalled, she was trembling with remorse, repeating over and over, "I did a terrible

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ing, a terrible, terrible thing. Oh, God, I didn't mean to, but I did." May have been the most accurate statement of her therapeutic relationship with Marilyn; in any case, it was the last time she had anything to say, for Marianne Kris was dismissed that day and never saw Marilyn Monroe again.

Second, it was clear to Joe that, whatever her condition when she entered Payne Whitney, she was wretchedly unhappy, shaking and anorexic on her departure. She agreed to enter a far more comfortable and less threatening environment if he would stay at the hospital and be with her daily. At five o'clock on the afternoon of Friday, February 10, he helped her to settle into a private room at the Neurological Institute of the Columbia University-Presbyterian Hospital Medical Center. There she remained, regaining her strength, until March 5.

For years a letter from Marilyn Monroe to Ralph Greenson was believed lost—a document providing details of Marilyn's state of mind and feeling and her assessment of her life that winter; in 1992, it was at last discovered. The letter was written on March 1 and 2, 1961, from Columbia-Presbyterian, and the sanity, sobriety, wit and maturity of the writer are everywhere apparent. If ever there was any doubt that Marilyn Monroe at this time was a woman who, despite problems, had a clear take on her life, a native intelligence and compassion, it is forever belied by her letter.

Dear Dr. Greenson,

Just now when I looked out the hospital window where the snow had covered everything, suddenly everything is kind of a muted green. There are grass and shabby evergreen bushes, though the trees give me a little hope—and the desolate bare branches promise maybe there will be spring and maybe they promise hope.

Did you see "The Misfits" yet? In one sequence you can perhaps see how bare and strange a tree can be for me. I don't know if it comes across that way for sure on the screen—I don't like some of the selections in the takes they used. As I started to write this letter about four quiet tears had fallen. I don't know quite why.

Last night I was awake all night again. Sometimes I wonder what the night time is for. It almost doesn't exist for me—it

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In early August, Marilyn decided to return to Los Angeles. Unable to find a New York psychiatrist she liked and unwilling to consider a return to Marianne Kris, she settled on Greenson for permanent therapy. While Marilyn traveled by airplane to California, she asked Ralph Roberts to drive cross-country with his car, so that over the next few months he could be her companion, chauffeur (driving was still awkward after her surgery) and masseur. This position he was glad to undertake for so close a friend. She leased a room for him at the Chateau Marmont Hotel, less than ten minutes away from Doheny Drive, and they were together (like the most devoted siblings, as Pat and Susan put it) every day from August to November. Ralph helped Marilyn resettle in her apartment; they shopped; he delivered her for facials at Madame Renna's, on Sunset Boulevard; he drove her to Greenson's home for sessions every afternoon at four; and most evenings they barbecued supper on the terrace at Doheny. She called him "The Brother."<sup>2</sup>

Among Marilyn's first requests was that Ralph help to install heavy curtains, similar to those she had in the Beverly Glen house in 1956—blackout fabric extending almost the entire width of the wall to assure a complete blockage of light.

Marilyn was, according to Ralph, trying to take things slowly at first; her health and stamina returned, and she seemed happy and optimistic. But Ralph, Pat, Susan Strasberg, Allan Snyder and, on his occasional visits to Los Angeles, Rupert Allan noticed that the more deeply Marilyn entered into her psychotherapy, the more miserable she became. "At first she adored Greenson," Roberts recalled,

but it did not seem to any of us that he was good for her. He began to exert more and more control over her life, dictating who she should have for friends, whom she might visit and so forth. But she felt it was necessary to obey.

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2. To confuse tourists and fans, Marilyn installed on the doorbell at Doheny Drive the name Marjorie Stengel. Formerly Montgomery Clift's secretary, Stengel had worked briefly for Marilyn in New York after the departure of May Reis.

tor or cameraman, Greenson was unfazed. He said, according to Feldman's detailed notes, that he would "be able to get his patient to go along with any reasonable request and *although he did not want us to deem his relationship as a Svengali one, he in fact could persuade her to anything reasonable that he wanted.*"<sup>1</sup>

Continuing this expression of egomania, Greenson astonished everyone by saying that he was ready to assume responsibility for all creative areas of the picture: to select the new director and cameraman, to decide which scenes Marilyn would or would not perform and which takes would finally be printed. "I pointed out to Dr. Greenson," noted Feldman, "that although I was sure he knew his business, I agreed with Mickey [Rudin] that he [Greenson] was not necessarily expert in our motion picture business."

The meeting, which began at half past twelve, continued through luncheon. A few minutes before four, when Rudin returned to his office, there was already a message awaiting him from Fox: the studio considered Marilyn Monroe in breach of contract and was prepared to proceed with all available legal remedies. In fact, they had so proceeded on Thursday afternoon, and thus the Friday meeting was an empty formality. Moments before the Los Angeles County Court closed that June 7, a suit was filed against Marilyn Monroe Productions, Inc., and its employee Marilyn Monroe, in the amount of \$500,000. Sheilah Graham, who got the news from Henry Weinstein on Thursday, published it in her column in the *Citizen-News* that night; otherwise it was unreported in the press until Friday and Saturday, June 8 and 9.

When the news broke widely over that weekend, Marilyn was, as Allan Snyder, Marjorie Plecher and others remembered, unutterably depressed, for she could not believe that Fox would go so far as to fire her. She had, after all, made twenty of her twenty-nine films there and longed to believe that at last she was valued and had friends.

The dismissal, said Peter Levathes in an official statement, "was made necessary because of Miss Monroe's repeated wilful breaches of her contract. No justification was given for her failure to report for photography on many occasions. The studio has suffered losses through

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1. Italics are the author's. Considering the visit to Gurdin the previous day, Greenson's allusion to Svengali sounds chilling.

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these absences." This was a simple case of muscular exertion by Levathes, acting at last on orders from Gould, Loeb and the rest of the board. Then, Levathes seemed to admit that Twentieth Century-Fox was itself a place fit only for madmen: "We've let the inmates run the asylum," he added, which meant that actors were lunatics and executives little more than keepers of a madhouse—not an allusion likely to win staff support.

Weinstein, years later, offered his own explanation, and it was at least partly correct. The real reason Marilyn was fired, he said, was that "*Cleopatra* was way behind schedule and costing millions, and here we had this small picture behind schedule. It looked as if Skouras and his appointed head Levathes were losing control of their talent. And so she was a pawn—an interesting pawn, a sad pawn, it's tragic, it's funny—but a pawn. And that's the real Hollywood story." And, he might have added, it is often enough the story of Hollywood.

"They just didn't understand," said David Brown, a veteran of problems more difficult even than this,

and they decided to play hardball like businessmen: "We'll sue you. . . . We'll hold you to every last clause. . . . You'll never work in this town again," and so forth and so on. These executives were storm troopers delivering messages. It was all so unnecessary.

It was also very soon regretted by the men at Fox, who scrambled to correct a potentially disastrous oversight.

That the company had much earlier begun negotiations for Marilyn's replacement on the picture was obvious on Saturday, when newspapers showed a photo of George Cukor, smiling too broadly with Lee Remick, who was signed on Saturday to replace Marilyn; in fact, Remick landed the role only after Kim Novak and Shirley MacLaine turned it down. And with this single announcement about Remick's employment, the men at Fox revealed their delirious incompetence, for Dean Martin's contract gave him the right to approve his leading lady. Loyal to Marilyn, Martin at once telephoned his agent Herman Citron and announced he would not proceed with *Something's Got to Give*—news that touched and cheered Marilyn to the point of tears.

The roller coaster continued its crazy route. Early Monday morn-